INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HISTORY

E-ISSN: 2706-9117
P-ISSN: 2706-9109
www.historyjournal.net
IJH 2025; 7(6): 05-09
Received: 03-03-2025
Accepted: 09-04-2025

Akram Pasha
Department of Studies and Research in History and Archaeology, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Karnataka, India

Dr. LP Raju
Senior Professor, Department of Studies and Research in History and Archaeology, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author:
Akram Pasha
Department of Studies and Research in History and Archaeology, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Karnataka, India

The contribution of Sir M. Visvesvaraya to the cooperative movement in the princely state of Mysore

Akram Pasha and LP Raju

DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2025.v7.i6a.429

Abstract
The cooperative movement is a unique idea that is essential for humanity's existence on the principle of mutual help is self-help." In India, the efforts of cooperative initiations started in a formal way with passing the 1904 Cooperative Credit Society Act. In Mysore state, the cooperative movement influence can be noticed from the year1905, and the first credit society was registered. The Dewans of the Mysore state played a yeoman role in popularising the cooperative movement among the common masses through using their office machinery and their individual efforts. The effort of Sir M. Visvesvaraya was most important. During the beginning of his office tenure, the number of societies was 208, which, during the end of his office tenure, increased to 934. The cooperative sector scope extended considerably during this period, from credit societies to sugar crushing, rice hulling, consumer marketing, and other fields.

Keywords: Co-operative, credit, dewans, masses, sugar crushing, rice harvesting, marketing

Introduction
The co-operative movement is a social and economic movement that aims to empower individuals through collective ownership and democratic control of businesses and organizations. It is based on the idea that people can achieve common economic, social, and cultural success by working together on voluntarily basis. The cooperative movement is an organized effort where individuals unite wilfully to meet general economic, and societal requirement through democratically owned and managed institutions.
The idea of cooperatives was there in India right from the beginning of the pre-Christian era in the form of the Shreni system, the Nidhi system of the Chola period, and the concept of the panchayat in village administration. As we know, after the Industrial Revolution, the labour communities in the West, particularly in England, faced many challenges for respectful and dignified life after the 18th century C.E. So, to address the challenges under the leadership of Rockdale, the first formal cooperative was established on the principles of mutual help as self-help, called the Rockdale Equitable Pioneers Society, in the year 1844, consisting of 28 artisans of Lancashire industrial labourers. In India, in 1904, the Cooperative Credit Society Act was passed, and the first Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society was established in Kanaginahal in the present Gadag district of Karnataka in the year 1905. Under the leadership of Dewan Sir M. Visvesvaraya, the cooperatives sector achieved commendable success from 1912 to 1918 in the princely state of Mysore.

Brief profile of Sir. M. Visvesvaraya
Before going to discuss about his role in the development of the cooperatives in Mysore state, we will have a brief look on his early life. Sir M. Visvesvaraya was born in the village of Muddenahalli in Kolar district of Mysore state on 15th September 1861. His parents were Srinivasa Sastry and Vekatachalamma. He completed his primary education in Muddenahalla and Chikkaballapura. For pursuance of higher education, he went to Bangalore and joined the Wesleyan High School and then for higher education in Central College. The Principal of Central College, Prof. Charles Water, was very much impressed by the ability of Sir M. Visvesvaraya and recommended his name to Dewan C. Rangacharlu in 1880 for higher studies. Dewan issued him a Mysore state government scholarship to pursue technical education at Poona Science College. In 1883, he completed his engineering course and joined as a junior engineer in Bombay Presidency P.W.D service. Later he joined the Mysore administrative service on November 15, 1909, as the chief engineer, when T.

Ananda Rao was working as Dewan of Mysore princely State and contributed to the technical advancement of princely state of state of Mysore. After the retirement of Mr T. Ananda Rao in November 1912, Sir M. Visvesvaraya became the princely state of Mysore's Dewan. During his tenure as the Dewan, all-round development can be noticed in different fields, including the cooperative sector. In this paper more importance will be given to his role in the development of the cooperative movement during his tenure of office as Dewan.

Review of Literature

In her work titled "Hundred Years of cooperative development in India, Dr. Laman Sami, published in 2011, gives detail account of cooperative movement in India from 1904 to 2004. These books explain in details information about the stages of cooperative movement, legislative measures of British India and independent Indian Government. It also gives information about bylaws of Cooperative registration. In his book, Sir M Visvesvaraya titled "The speeches of Sir. M. Visvesvaraya Dewan of Mysore 1910 to 1917, which was published in 1920 gives us reliable information about the development of cooperative societies under the Dewan of Mysore, Sir M Visvesvaraya. In his book, Sir M. Visvesvaraya titled the reconstruction of India published in 1920 by P S King and sons Londan provide us the information about future plan of cooperative development in India.

Objectives of the study

This study is based on the following objectives to be achieved:

- To explore the development and expansion of the cooperative movement in the princely state of Mysore during the years 1912 to 1918.
- To assess the contributions of Sir M. Visvesvaraya in promoting cooperative ideals and institutions among the general population during his tenure as Dewan of Mysore.
- To examine the sustained growth and institutional continuity of the cooperative movement in Mysore throughout this formative period.

Methodology

A qualitative method is adopted to collect the source material; only primary sources and government documents are used. Collected data will be tabulated and analysed.

Early efforts in setting path for co-operative movement in Mysore State

After extensive deliberation and numerous discussions, the Government of India has recently enacted a measure called the Co-operative Credit Societies' Act 1904 and has released a resolution detailing the factors that guided them in developing the different provisions of the legislation and outlining the principles they wish for the Act to be implemented. The measure prevents any large-scale initiation of the movement and the indiscriminate granting of subsidies by the Government, flaws that I have previously mentioned as having been detrimental to the Agricultural Banks of Mysore. Based on this act Mysore Cooperative Society Act was passed in 1905, and the credit cooperatives societies were registered in the office Cooperative Registrar.

The new registrar of cooperatives was given the responsibility of getting the status of present conditions of industries and finding out the means to develop them. At that time there was scarce information about the trade and commerce of the Mysore state. Another responsibility given by the Mysore Government to the new registrar was to prepare the commercial statistics for the information of the government, which was used for further developmental ideas for the business people.

Sir M Visvesvaraya in his work, the reconstructing India (Sir Visvesvaraya M, 1920) says that, "The main solution of the problems face by workers is cooperation among them. By working for the mutually, that means each for all and all for each, the workers would be able themselves to reap the profits of large-scale production which under any but the co-operative system will go too largely into the pockets of the capitalist. The modern expedients of piece-work payment, profit-sharing, etc., should therefore be discussed by employers and public men alike, with a view to stimulating production and raising wages". Idea behind the cooperative was to help the lower strata of the society to the economic self-sufficiency and the welfare of the farming community.

The idea of farmer's welfare

India is a nation of villages; more than 80% of the Indian population are residents of villages. The welfare of the farming community is the welfare of the nation. In the same way, in Mysore state, more than 80% of the population are residents of villages, and the welfare of Mysore state entirely depends on the wellbeing of the farming community. With regard to the welfare of the farming community, in his Harihara Taluk public address, he presented the plan for their welfare. "I am glad to be able to say that, by the exertions of our enthusiastic registrar, the movement of co-operative societies is making good progress, although a great deal more yet remains to be done. It should be our aim and hope that an intelligent farmer who cultivates a large area and takes part in local trade should have the same opportunity of rising to positions of influence as any person of his education among members of the liberal professions in our towns and cities." Through this statement, we gain a clearer understanding that farmers' agricultural products should be prepared for the market at a fair price. This can be achieved through a cooperative marketing system where no intermediaries are involved.

This development and advancement in the co-operatives campaign were achieved with the active participation of the state system. The involvement of the administrative system was crucial in facilitating the advancements within the co-operative movement, ensuring effective organisation and support. This collaboration helped to streamline processes and enhance overall efficiency, leading to greater success in achieving the movement's goals. The progress of the co-operative movement is due to the committed and selfless or active work of several of our government employee headed by Raja Mantra Praveena, Srinivas C Iyengar and Appu Rao D. More importance will hereafter will be attached to the development of the co-operative movement with a soul view to broadened the co-operative principle to many forms of business activities in villages and to rural business activities generally. That means the production related to the agriculture, cattle rearing, marketing of this products, and the extension of credit facilities on very simple conditions

from the state departments.

With regard to the above-mentioned facilities and provisions, in one of his addresses he says this: “Each family will be able to lay by a little store of grain; co-operative granaries will spring up; the wasteful use of cow-dung as fuel will be checked; plantations for the supply of fuel will be started; labor-saving appliances will come into use, and subsidiary occupations will multiply.”

Need of educating the village folk

Any system which is introduced should be conveyed through the proper mode. As per Sir M. Visvesvaraya, education is the best mode; in any state, if the people are educated, any new system can easily get success, so for the success of the cooperative in Mysore state, the first and foremost thing is to provide good and quality education. In his different writings and literary works, his idea about educating people can be better understood. In one of his public speeches, he says like this: “The question of educating the adult population in the rural areas in the three R's (Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic) and of spreading correct ideas of business among them is receiving attention, with a view to enabling the cultivators to maintain farm accounts and calculate their income and losses. This initiative aims to empower rural cultivators by equipping them with essential literacy and numeracy skills, thus enhancing their ability to manage their finances effectively. Ultimately, this education is intended to improve their economic stability and promote better business practices within the agricultural sector. The co-operative movement is making satisfactory progress.”

Facilities required for an ideal town

In one of his public speeches, he says like this: "To a town say, of about 10,000 inhabitants the activities and professions may be classified into different divisions as follows:" Along with different civic and other added facilities, it should have organisation of commerce and trade, joint stock and co-operative. That means for the fulfilment of financial and commercial aspects, co-operative societies will play a main role. Sir M. Visvesvaraya counted some 12 institutions, in which the fourth main requirement is a co-operative society.

The attention of the government should be given to the systematic improvement of towns. Every town should have a plan showing its potential extension and rough schemes should be prepared for water supply and drainage, developed according to local resources. The ideal economic needs of the town, the provision of facilities like, education, various occupations centers, banking infrastructure and Co-operative societies, information centers, museums, tourism facilities also need to be given more importance by government authority.

The residents of towns are also more interested in the economic improvement of their town. That means the government's prime responsibility is to provide facilities for standard education, facilities for tourists and tourism development, the development of industrial complexes, thrift for savings, help to reduce indebtedness, the establishment of cooperative societies by the people, and the formation of trade associations.

According to Sir M. Visvesvaraya, for better administration, a state should create an ideal provincial system, consisting of 10,000,000 (ten million) and not more than 25,000,000 (25 million) people. The only reason for the creation of big provinces is to resist the pressure of central government suitable for rapid development in generating resources to provide sufficiently large-scale institutions and organisations like universities, the development of industries and commerce, and also cooperative societies.

As per Sir M. Visvesvaraya, every union should have a primary educational institution and a vocational institute for training. The village should also have the assembly hall, reading rooms, a library, an agricultural cooperative society, a society devoted to promoting public work in the village, a manufacturing hub, a literary club, hotels for visitors, a youth club and other civic and social organizations... For an ideal town and village, Sir M. Visvesvaraya says that an town and village should have cooperative societies and banks, which he considered the most required institutions.

Development of co-operative societies under Sir Visvesvaraya

Table 1: Co-operative movement of Mysore under Sir. M Visvesvaraya

Sl. No.	Year	No. of societies	Total societies	No. of members	Working capital	Reserve fund	Total transaction	profit
1	1912	97	208	13,148	6,75,312	18,833	34,83,955	34,836
2	1913	136	343	24,536	12,89,338	30,600	59,52,081	1,29,981
3	1914	237	580	40479	2147340	56,240	9628523	2,30,224
4	1915	145	725	53,267	30,85,747	96,669	1,31,13,546	1,61,521
5	1916	103	800	64,293	44,21,688	1,59,626	1,72,53,813	2,17.976
6	1917	134	934	74906	5764024	2,34,740	2,15,02,190	2,63,205

***Data source:** Annual reports of mysore government and co-operative department

The above table gives us the idea of continuous development in the cooperative movement in the princely state of Mysore from 1912 to 1917. In 1912, total societies were 208, which years of accepting the office of dewan of Mysore state by Sir M Visvesvaraya. The total membership in cooperative societies was 13148, and the working capital of these cooperative societies was Rs. 675312 with a reserve fund of Rs. 18833. The total transaction was Rs. 3483955, and the profit margin was Rs. 34836.

Sir M.M. Visvesvaraya in his address to the Dasara representative assembly in 1913, says that “the cooperative movement gained commendable development. The numbers of societies increased from 208 to 343; one cooperative society was closed, and 136 new cooperative societies were registered in the registrar's office. The number of members increased from Rs. 13148 to Rs. 24536. At the end of the year 1913, the working capital increased from Rs. 675312 to Rs. 1289338. The reserve fund also increased from Rs. 18833 to Rs. 3.600, except in Kadur and Chitaldurg (Chitradurga) districts; in the rest of Mysore state, cooperative societies developed considerably.”

“The cooperative movement makes considerable

advancement in Malnad district, where till know made slow progress. In this region the cooperative societies undertake the improvement of irrigation land, purchase of raw material, and sale of products in the cooperative market."

"In 1914, cooperative societies review, the membership increased from 343 to 580, membership from 24538 to 40479. The working capital increased from Rs. 1289338 to 2147340, the transaction is increased from Rs.5952081 to Rs.9628523, the profit also increased from Rs. 129981 to Rs. 230224 and the reserve fund increased from Rs. 30600 to Rs. 56240.

During 1915, the Mysore state have shown steady growth in cooperative movement in which number of cooperative increased from 530 to 725, the membership increased from 40479 to 53267, the working capital also increased from Rs. 2147340 to Rs. 3085747. The reserves fund of Mysore state societies increased from Rs. 56238 to Rs. 96669, the total profit was Rs. 161521.

A total of 103 new cooperative societies were founded in 1915–16, while 28 existing societies had their registrations revoked. At the conclusion of the year, 800 societies were actually operating. The total transactions increased from Rs. 1,31,13,546 to Rs. 1,72,53,813, the net profits increased from Rs. 1,61,521 to Rs. 2,17.976, the reserve fund increased from B.s. 96,669 to Rs. 1,59,626; the membership increased from 53,267 to 64,293; the share capital increased from Rs. 16,36,465 to Rs. 20,26,489; and the working capital increased from Rs. 30,85,747 to Rs. 44,21,688.

The cooperative movement in Mysore state was steadily gaining ground in 1917–18, as shown in table no. 1. "From 800 to 934, there are now more credit societies and other types of societies. Cooperative societies now conduct a total of Rs. 1,87,00,000 in transactions, up from Rs. 1,72,00,000. Plans have been made to continue a debt survey in order to come up with ways to lower debt in the Malnad region.

Co-operative movement in sugar cane crushing industry

During his tenure as Dewan, Sir M. Visvesvaraya played an important role in the development of sugar crushing and rice hulling through the cooperative sector. "Ten co-operative societies for crushing sugar cane, producing jaggery, and hulling paddy have been established with the help of the Department of Industries and Commerce and the Registrar of Co-operative Societies. The government has provided Rs. 45,000 in funding for these societies. Cooperative credit societies have played a key role in expanding the use of improved tools, oil-cake manure, and seed among raiyats, and agricultural cooperation is also gradually developing."

Co-operative conferences and propaganda efforts

During his address to the Dasara Representative Assembly, Sir M Visvesvaraya says that, "Last October, His Highness the Yuvaraja opened the third Provincial Co-operative Conference in Mysore, which was chaired by Mr. K. P. Puttanna Chetty, Dewan Bahadur Rajasabha Bhushana. Ten other locations had smaller, less formal, but no less beneficial conferences, which were largely the result of local initiative and planning under the direction of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies." These conferences were conducted with a vision to familiarized the idea of cooperative in Mysore state.

"The Deputy Commissioners and some department heads organized conferences throughout the state to address issues related to the Economic Conference, Village Improvements and Co-operative Societies, and the general needs of the populace. This was done in an effort to increase interest in the work related to public measures in the rural areas. Conferences were occasionally held at Hoblis' headquarters as well. As mentioned below, a total of 95 conferences were held." Due to this propaganda, the idea of cooperative societies was familiarized to the common masses of Mysore state.

To reach out to the local level, the conferences were held with the help of competent resources persons from the registrar of cooperative societies in 'Hobli level: 6, Taluk level: 83, District level: 4, and Provincial: 2. Of these, the Revenue Department and the Taluk Progress Committees organized 56 of them, the Agricultural Department organized 16, the Co-operative Societies organized 20, and other agencies organized three. Throughout the year, there were seventeen District and Taluk Conferences and one general Co-operative Conference, which was inaugurated by the Yuvaraja of Mysore. Their importance as a tool for public education on cooperative issues cannot be overstated. As you are aware, the Yuvaraja graciously opened this year's State Conference, which took place in this city from the 10th to the 13th of this month. The Hon. Mr. Lallubhai Samaldas Mehta of Bombay served as the conference's chairman.'

Idea of land development bank for agriculture security

In address to Mysore Economic Conference, Sir M Visvesvaraya says that, "Special consideration should be given to the construction of rural cooperative stores, such as those that can be found in practically all Italian towns. Mr. Ranganatha Rao Saheb enthusiastically explained the land bank issue, but there were concerns that it might impede the development of cooperative societies and that it might, by giving the raiyats access to inexpensive money, increase rather than decrease debt."

For long duration credit to the farmers and also for repayment of existing loans, the foundation of agricultural Development Bank is essential, so in his book 'Reconstructing India' he wrote like this "Another pressing issue is the establishment of agricultural banks in every province, primarily to support cooperative credit societies. A strong, all-encompassing financial system that meets the demands of the nation will be permanently formed if cross-connections are kept between all classes of these institutions, the security of which is naturally the responsibility of a state bank or banking system, and if appropriate checks are kept."

Regarding the foundation of land Development Bank, in one of the public speeches he says like this, "On the subject of Land and Industrial Bank, the members gave some very interesting information. Our hands are full at present with the Mysore Bank and the large number of the co-operative credit societies which the Registrar has brought into existence. A Land Bank is also necessary and, sooner or later, one must be started. The Committee will doubtless investigate the question in the coming year with a view to practical action. We also want to make a beginning to induce graduates". Later the State Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank was established on 29 November 1929 in Mysore and it was renamed as Land Development Bank in 1964.

Conclusion

The idea behind popularising the cooperatives in Mysore State was to improve the lives and living conditions of common people for the sake of the all-round development of Mysore State. The cooperative efforts and initiative of Sir M. Visvesvaraya make the future prospectus of the cooperative movement in Mysore State bright. Along with Sir M Visvesvaraya, many other public servants also played their role, which was acknowledged by him on many occasions in public speeches and writings. The names of Raja Mantra Praveena, Mr. C Srinivas Iyengar and Mr D. Appu Rao are most noteworthy. At the time of the beginning of his tenure as the Dewan of Mysore State, cooperative societies were monotonous in nature, entirely concentrated in the field of agriculture and its allied activities. Through the above table, number 1, detailed information is provided regarding the progress of the cooperative movement from 1912 to 1918. The different conferences were conducted between 1915 and 1917 to popularise the cooperative consciousness and its importance among the common masses, which led to the active participation of more than 74,906 as members and office bearers. Through the speeches of Sir M. Visvesvaraya, we understand some importance was also given to the participation of the depressed communities in the cooperative activities. During this period, depressed community co-operative societies increased from 7 to 15, with more than a thousand members, and the government had given financial support to such a type of credit society. The cooperative activities got diversified in nature and format; most of the professions of common people were brought into the cooperative society's activities, which covered all professions of agriculture-related activities and small businesses. In one of his public speeches, he conceived the idea of a model town and listed the most important facilities, which were required, and the cooperative society was the most important one among them. The idea of a thrift system for small saving facilities is that every day the members need to save some amount of money in the society, and the society will return it after a certain fixed time with profit or added interest. The success of Sir M. Visvesvaraya can be measured by the fact that at the beginning of his role in 1912, only 208 cooperative societies were there, but at the end of his office, that increased to 934, which shows the effect of his leadership and teamwork.

References

1. International Co-operative Alliance. International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), 1945.
2. Visvesvaraya SM. Speeches of Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Dewan of Mysore 1910–11 to 1916–17. Bangalore: Government Press, 1920.
3. Visvesvaraya SM. Reconstructing India. London: P.S. King & Sons Ltd, Orchard House, Westminster; 1920.
4. Mysore Government. Address to Dasara Representative Assembly 1910–11. Bangalore: Government Press, 1910.
5. Mysore Government. Address to Dasara Representative Assembly 1914. Bangalore: Government Press, 1914.
6. Mysore Government. Dewans of Mysore. Bangalore: Government Press, 1914.
7. Visvesvaraya SM. Address to Dasara Representative Assembly. Bangalore: Government Press, 1913.
8. Visvesvaraya SM. Speeches of Sir M. Visvesvaraya. Bangalore: Government Press, 1915.
9. Visvesvaraya SM. Memoirs of My Working Life. Bombay: Borton for G. Claridge Ltd., 1951.
10. Sami DL. Hundred Years of Cooperative Development in India. Delhi: Akanksha Publishing House, 2011.
11. Government of Mysore State. Dewans of Mysore. Bangalore: Government Press, 1904.